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By GEO. H. BEAMAN.

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For the Herald.

HISTORICAL INCIDENTS OF THIS VICINITY—No. 9

RUTLAND FORTS.

About the commencement of the Revolutionary War the inhabitants of the vicinity erected a fort for their mutual safety, on what is now the burn district in East Rutland village. Few persons now living recollect it, but brief details can be obtained concerning its history. Its form was oblong—about eight rods East and West, and ten rods North and South—its South side nearly connecting with the North line of Mr. Daniels' store. It was made chiefly of maple—the pickets were sunk about five feet in the ground and extended about fourteen feet high, the spikes of the pickets touching each other, being hewed smooth, while the inside and outside were uneven—at each corner was a redoubt or flanking about eight feet square, so that the front of each side of the fort could be taken from one flanking—at a convenient height for shooting, were port holes radiating in and out, leaving the center only large enough to admit a musket, and extending at a distance, of six feet apart, all around the sides of the fort and flanders—On the West side a little South of the center was the only gate. Inside of the fort was a small building for provisions and ammunition in time of need, afterwards used as a dwelling. In the South part of the fort was a well, over which, some years after, a large flat stone was placed and this covered with earth, so that for many years the well was not seen, though it is said by one familiar with it, that by a little labor, rightly deemed, the curious might be gratified in opening it. As other forts were built North and West of this, it soon became of little consequence, and the pickets were gradually used up for fuel, one of the inhabitants retaining from his industry in that particular, the sobriquet of "Picket John." No singular incident can, by any ingenuity at this day, be connected with its fate.

Immediately upon the organization of the government of Vermont, in March, 1778, it was decided to make Rutland the Head Quarters of the state troops, and Captain Gideon Brownson was appointed commander of the forces stationed here. Their first business was the erection of a suitable fort. This was located on the hill East of Mead's (now Cookin's) Falls. It was made of oven-baked logs or pickets, sunk in a trench five feet deep, rising fifteen feet high, sharpened at the top, and inclining slightly outward. Between each of the pickets on the inside was another single foot high, so as to be bullet-proof—port holes like those in the other Fort. It seems uncertain whether there were flanking to this fort or not. It was oblong and oval in form, enclosing an area of two or more acres, sufficient to accommodate two or three companies. On the East side was a block house of hewn logs, thirty or forty feet square, two stories high, round and studded, the jet under the eaves projecting two feet—in the lower story were horizontal port holes and in the jet perpendicular ones through all of which a fire could be maintained completely raking every spot of ground about the house—the North and West sides of the block house formed a part of the outside of the fort—the door was on the East side. In the Northeast and Southwest corners were sentry boxes, elevated on poles so as to overlook the approaches to the fort, hoisted up chin high, with a covering to ward off the rain and snow, and a ladder to ascend to the door in the box. Near the Northeast corner was a guard house of rough boards, hoisted and floored, in which the sentry slept, when relieved from their two hours watch. Among the North side were the officers' barracks of rough boards, wavy pads sloping up against the pickets the soldiers' barracks along the South side, and the intervening space extending East and West was used for parade ground, through the whole length of which was cut in the turf a line on which the raw recruits learned to "run the mark." The fort was surrounded by a ram of fine pointed stakes, and with these, gave it the sobriquet of "Rutland's Ram." A man present who had been an officer, said they were prepared for a protracted siege, for there was a cache of powder—so much to which the saving, (Baptist McCausland,) regaled more information as many cartridges in as many minutes on board ship. The ground South and East of the fort, being covered with shrub oak, was turned South to the Green, and that in the direction of Lamoille Valley, so as to give a clear view of the surrounding country.

The dwelling houses now on the hill East of Cookin's Falls are on the space enclosed by the pickets—the most Northern one being about where the block house was. There is some reason to believe that the block house was built earlier than the fort.

This fort was called Fort Ranger, and was the Head Quarters of the State troops until 1781, when the presence of a large British army on Lake Champlain caused the removal of the Head Quarters to Castleton. Fort Ranger, situated but a few rods from the territorial center of Rutland, in the immediate vicinity of Mead's saw-mill and grist mill, the meeting-house, and the tavern of John Hopson Johnson (built of plans on the site of Ripley & Bailey's store), naturally became the rendezvous of the town, the favorite resort of idlers, loungers, and losers, as well as the most convenient resort of those anxious for the public weal and the chances of latter speculation—here on the Sabbath noon did the goodly livers of gospel congregate in the interval between Parson Root's forenoon and afternoon discourses and exchange their precious wares of local chit-chat, until this one's rise and that one's fall, this new thing and that old thing were all duly pondered and discussed—here did the Revolutionary patriots assemble to learn the latest orders of the government and the fresh news from the American Army—here was the much valued weekly newspaper from Hartford, Conn., received by post, read and circulated—here did the adio soldiers and congenial Lazarro exercise their skill and strength in the exciting games of long ball, &c.—and here (in the block house) did the freemen assemble in town meeting, wherein rustic Solons uttered their oracular dicta.—Though Rutland was terribly alarmed by threatened invasions of Indians, several times during the Revolutionary War, and the town immediately North of it actually invaded—Fort Ranger was never attacked by the enemy, and the only danger its inmates incurred arose from the assassin shots of Tories and Indians in the night, aiming at the heads of the men in the sentry boxes or incisive stragglers.

On the 27th March, 1781, the town meeting was opened in the meetinghouse according to usage, thence it adjourned to the tavern of John Hopson Johnson, and thence as the town record reads "for necessary reasons" it adjourned to the "Store House in Fort Ranger."

"Proceedings of a Court Martial against Melchiah Groul, Feb. 18, 1779.

Nots.—The within officers belong to Col. Warner's Regiment.

Fort Ranger, February 18, 1779.

Garrison Orders.

A Court of Inquiry to set at 12 o'clock, this day to examine and hear the evidence for and against such prisoners as shall be brought before them—whereof—

Capt. Thomas Lee President,
Lt. Marvin, Lt. Wight, Ensign Beach, Ensign Brush—Members.

By order of Gideon Brownson, Com't the Court being met and duly sworn, proceeded to try Melchiah Groul—the prisoner being brought before the Court, pleads not guilty. The Court after hearing the evidence for and against the prisoner—it is the opinion of the Court that the crime is not supported.

For Thomas Lee, President.

The above judgment is approved of by the Commanding Officer, and order the prisoner to be set at liberty.

Per Gideon Brownson, Capt. Com't.

Copy of "Orders for Capt. Thomas Sawyer commanding at Fort Ranger, dated Arlington, May 14, 1779.

The design and object of a garrison's being kept at your post is to prevent the incursion of the enemy on the Northern frontier and to annoy them should they come within your reach; as there are two other Forts, one at Castleton, and the other at Plattsburgh dependent on yours, you are to take care that they are properly manned and provided proportionable to your strength at Fort Ranger. You will keep out constant scouts towards the Lake, so as to get the earliest intelligence of the motion and designs of the enemy. You will keep the command of Fort Ranger and the other Forts depending until otherwise ordered by me, or until some Continental Officer shall take the command. You will post the earliest intelligence of the motion of the enemy to me and guard against surprise. Given under my hand—

Thos. CHITTENDEN, Capt. Com't.

H. H.

For the Herald.

No. Ixviii.—The inquiry is often heard whether the telegraph wires will operate to signalize the safety of horses in the near vicinity of these conductors of the electric fluid. We may reason upon the subject, and perhaps in this way come to a right conclusion. But the problem will be solved by facts, collected from general observation. On which ever side the suspicious premonition they will establish the general rule. Nearly all the great discoveries in the use of combinations of the material elements, tend to realize never dreamt of by the wise seer. To this belief insomuch, I add a short extract of a letter just received from Saratoga, giving account of a recent transaction which seems to confirm the general rule.

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